

SPIRITUAL TALKS

SWAMI PURUSHOTTAMANANDA

VASISHTHA GUHA ASHRAM

GOOLAR-DOGI 249 303

DIST. TEHRI-GARHWAL (UTTARANCHAL)

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Chapter I

WHAT ARE WE SEEKING? HAPPINESS

Everybody wants something all the time. It may be tangible things like money or children, or intangible things like fame or power. Although the objects which are being pursued are innumerable, the real objective is the same - happiness. Everyone without exception is pursuing happiness either knowingly or unknowingly. Even the greatest statesmen, scientists, businessmen, artists are really seeking happiness through their different activities although they will deny this fact if questioned on the point. The various kinds of satisfactions which come on the fulfilment of desires are merely means of gaining happiness. But this happiness is temporary and partial. What we are in search of is unalloyed happiness which is permanent.

Why is it that although we pursue happiness all the time it always eludes us ? Because we take the wrong direction. A pilgrim wants to go to Badrinath from Hardwar. Will he be able to reach his destination if he starts moving in a southern direction? The more he continues his journey the further away he gets from his destination. The moment he realizes his mistake, turns back and starts moving towards the north he begins to approach his goal. The happiness we are seeking is inside us. Within us is the fountain-head of bliss, even a drop of which is quite sufficient to make us fully intoxicated forever and destroy

completely our misery and pain. But fools as we are, we believe that happiness is somewhere outside and can be obtained through wife and children, wealth and property, name and fame, and consequently we spend most of our life in acquiring these external things. We are like the deer which goes on running after a mirage to quench its thirst and falls dead ultimately without finding the water. We spend our life in searching for happiness and find that life is mostly full of sorrow and suffering. Even the temporary enjoyments are found to lead to suffering ultimately.

Chapter II
THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING - AVIDYA AND MAYA

If we know the cause of a disease it can be cured easily. Without a correct diagnosis it is not possible to cure any disease permanently, though by applying palliatives we may suppress it temporarily. So first find the cause of the suffering which is present everywhere in the world, then only you can cure it permanently. The basic cause of suffering is that we have taken false things as real. Leave off these false and unreal things and grasp the Real, the Lord, and your suffering will come to an end. As long as we hug these false shadows we must continue to suffer and cry. There is no other way of putting an end to our suffering in an effective manner. It is no use running here and there for removing this basic *maharoga* by means of palliatives.

Why do we hug these false shadows and do not make any effort to find the Reality behind them? Because of Avidya or ignorance. *Vetti* means knowing, and the root of the word is *vid*, to know (the Real Truth). Not knowing the Truth is Avidya. And what is Truth? That which is always existing and remains in the same state without any change or modification. The whole Universe, seen or unseen, is changing every moment. Can it be true? Therefore whatever you can see is not real. Yet we are taking all this as real. We take even our physical body as real although it may not exist in the very next moment. We think it is 'mine'

although we may have to leave it any moment. Because we are all the time taking what is impermanent and false, as permanent and real we must suffer. We may be very intellectual and know a lot of things connected with the unreal world but in reality we are fools. Those who are wise and know the truth do not consider anything in this impermanent world of shadows as real. They have no feeling of possession with regard to anything, not even with regard to the body which is so close to them and appears to belong to them. This wisdom gives them freedom from suffering.

So anyone who wants to be free from suffering must renounce the false and the untrue. All desires about wealth, name, wife, etc. are illusory and must be given up and we must change our attitude completely towards these things. We must try to grasp Sat which remains the same always. We must try to dispel the darkness of ignorance and get the Light of Truth. In the light of Truth we shall see that we are neither the body nor the mind nor Buddhi. We shall realize the truth of the Mahavakya, 'TAT-TVAM-ASI'. So try to know yourself. You are that Self which knows no sorrow, no worry, no trouble.

Why have we fallen into the darkness of Avidya? If we have fallen into a pit we do not want to know why we have fallen. Our immediate aim is to get out anyhow. But when we get out of this darkness of Avidya we realize we were all the time under an illusion. All this suffering which we were undergoing was purely mental, subjective and was due to lack of right knowledge. It was due to what is called Maya in Hindu philosophy.

What is Maya? It means that which is non-existent. This Jagat or the world we see around us has no real existence. We are living in an imaginary world and reproduce in our mind what the Lord of Maya imagines, just as a hypnotist can produce a tank in which those who are hypnotized can bathe while in reality there is no tank at all for those who are not under the spell of the hypnotist. In the dream state there are no buses, no aeroplanes but still you ride on them. This gives you an idea as to how we can see things without the actual presence of the objects anywhere. This shows that objects can be seen without their existence. So whatever is seen here has no real existence. It is only apparently, seemingly, not really true. The whole of Samsara is like that. If an ordinary hypnotist can produce such an illusion, why cannot the Lord of the Universe? Our duty is to dehypnotize ourselves and see the Lord who is producing the illusion. When we transcend the illusion there is no Samsara for us; we have destroyed the screen on which the illusory reflection is obtained.

Maya is not only an illusion but also a stimulant. It provides for the undeveloped Jiva an environment in which he can evolve gradually and develop all the qualities which are necessary for gaining Self-realization. All the impediments and temptations, trials and tribulations, although they are subjective, do bring out the qualities and capacities which are hidden within the soul. It is only in the lap of Maya that her children can grow until they are strong and capable enough to pierce through her veil and know their real nature.

We should not make the mistake of thinking that the

illusion of Maya is an ordinary illusion which can be removed easily. It is only in the state of the highest Samadhi that the world does not exist and is seen as an illusion. For the ordinary man the world is real enough and he has to live according to its laws; he has to adopt the right means and pursue his goal with determination and perseverance in order to free himself from the Great Illusion. It is only when he has found the Truth and realized his true nature that he will know that his bondage was his own mental creation.

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Chapter III
GOD OR ATMA - THE REAL OBJECT OF OUR SEARCH

What is Atma? Atma means "that which pervades everything". It is that Reality which is beyond the body; beyond the mind, beyond the Buddhi. It is nearer than the nearest and yet further than the furthest. It is the stimulator of all Tattwas. It is the Eye of eyes, the Ear of ears. It is that which gives light and life to every part of the body. Whatever we see inside and outside, we see through the Atma. Even in the dream state we see the dream through the Atma. It remains the same in all the three states of consciousness - Jagrat, Svapna, and Sushupti. These three states of consciousness which work through the Sthula, Sukshma and the Karana Sariras or bodies are merely manifestations of Atma. To know this Atma you have to dive deeper and deeper into your own consciousness. You have to become the Atma in order to know It. The more you go towards this Light the more you become the Light itself. See what Yajnavalkya says about this Atma in answer to the question put by Aruni Uddalaka:

अदृष्टो द्रष्टाऽश्रुत श्रोताऽमतो मन्ताऽविज्ञातो विज्ञाता
नान्योऽतोऽस्ति द्रष्टा नान्योऽतोऽस्ति श्रोता।
नान्योऽतोऽस्ति मन्ता नान्योऽतोऽस्ति विज्ञातैष त
आत्मान्तर्हस्यमृतः

This underlying Reality is called Brahman. The manifested Universe has come out of That, it is supported by That, it goes back into That. He is Satyam-Jnanam-Anandam - Eternal Truth, Eternal Knowledge, Eternal Bliss. The conceptions behind these words are, however, too subtle and the human mind turns back baffled when it tries to grasp them. Those who are steeped in ignorance and the worldly life, cannot understand the highest Truth. They must be taken to the ultimate Truth step by step. So the teacher tries to teach his disciples through *sakara* worship. He gives the disciple some form to worship. He tries to attract the worldly people through attractive objects. If you want to give medicine to a child you just attract him with some sweet things. So in attracting people to religion you must give them attractive things. Anyone who sees a beautiful form is naturally attracted.

The form is that of either a Deity like Vishnu, Durga, who represents an aspect of God, or an Avatara like Rama or Krishna. The advantage of taking an Avatara for worship is that one can read about the Leela of Bhagavan in Bhagavata or Ramayana and thus develop devotion towards Him in the easiest manner. It is very difficult to understand the truths of spiritual life in the abstract. But when these truths are presented in the form of stories they not only develop devotion towards the Lord but enable the disciple to understand them in the easiest manner. The Leelas of Krishna given in Bhagavata are wonderful in this respect. The naughty Krishna spills the milk and curd of the Gopis which is their wealth. Does not this point out a lesson to those who are hoarding wealth and all kinds of other things? The Lord will one day scatter all these things

and distribute them among the poor to destroy our attachment to things of the material world. Yashoda tries to bind Him but does not succeed. But when she is utterly exhausted she gives up and He then allows Himself to be bound. We try and try to find Him but He continues to elude us. Then we surrender ourselves to Him and lo! He reveals Himself to us. The *Chir-haran-leela* has a similar lesson to teach. In order to find Him we must approach Him naked. In perfect love there can be no fear, no shame, no bargaining.

In the same way the story of Bhagavan as given in Ramayana has a profound lesson to teach at every step. And no one can read the account of the incidents of His life as given by Tulsidas without a tremendous upwelling of devotion which purifies us and raises us to a state of exaltation.

That Bhagavata and Ramayana are not merely life stories of Bhagavan but reservoirs of the highest spiritual truths and wisdom will be seen from the profound philosophical truths contained in the original Bhagavata taught by Narayana to Brahma in four Slokas and given in the very beginning of the Bhagavata:

अहमेवासमेवाग्रे नान्यद्यत्सदसत्परम् ।
पश्चादहं यदेतच्च योऽवशिष्येत सोऽस्म्यहम् ॥१॥
ऋतेऽर्थं यत्पृथीयेत न प्रतीयेत चात्मनि ।
तद्विद्यादात्मनो म यां यथाऽऽभासो तथा तमः ॥२॥
यथा महान्ति भूतानि भूतेषु च्चावचेष्टन् ।
प्रविष्टान्यप्रविष्टानि तथा नेषु न नेष्टहम् ॥३॥
एतावदेव जिज्ञास्यं तत्त्वजिज्ञासुनाऽऽत्मनः ।
अन्वयव्यतिरेकाभ्यां यत् स्यात् सर्वत्र सर्वदा ॥४॥

Vijnanamaya-Kosha, the body through which wisdom or Buddhi is expressed. The Lord has given us Buddhi and we must exercise this faculty through our Vijnanamaya-Kosha and look at life from that point. You call a particular body as 'my' son. But his being 'your' son is only a thing of your imagination. Who is your son? If you take the body as your son, then if the body dies you will not even touch it. So exercise your intelligence. To know the truth and see the truth is the only way to be happy. In the dream state we see a tiger coming and we become fearful. There is really no tiger and we inflict this suffering upon ourselves. We ourselves are the cause of the sufferings we undergo. We have created this world of ours and unless we destroy it, we cannot be happy. The whole of the external world may disappear but unless we destroy the mental world which we have created, there will be no freedom for us. Seen from the highest world the mind is nothing and the Self alone exists. There is only bliss, bliss and bliss when you rise above the mind into the Anandamaya-Kosha. So try to rise to that abode of Bliss. If you go to the top of a mountain you do not see the houses etc. in the valley below. You see only one undifferentiated panorama. These are all practical things, not imaginary ideals. But to us all this world is the heaven of heavens, so where is the need of searching for the fountain of happiness? We are running all the time after money, name and fame, things which belong to the realm of illusion. That is why we have to suffer and cry over and over again. We are trying all the time to catch and keep hold of the everchanging world. How can we then have everlasting happiness? So it is the duty of the wise man to use his Buddhi and rise above this everchanging

world. The mind is material, *jada*. It has a substratum which is *chaitanya*, Atma. If we purify the mind and make it transparent, as it were, the Atma alone shines through it. So one must think and think. Vichara is necessary. What is Sat? What is Asat? What is permanent? What is impermanent? This is Vichara. He who does not exercise his Vichara and Viveka, though living, is really dead. If we exercise our thought through Buddhi, the problem of life is easily solved. If a student does not exercise his mind on a problem it will always remain unsolved. Who am I? Where did I come from? Who is my son? If you think over these problems constantly and earnestly you will begin to see the truth underlying them. So try to find this Truth. Do not postpone the solution of the problem.

How to purify the mind? If you consider a thing poison you do not touch it. But the objects in the outer world give us a little pleasure for a short time and that is why we stick to them. But we get these passing pleasures at the cost of the greatest pleasure, the Ananda of the Atma. What is the source of this temporary pleasure or mental happiness which we feel in our contacts with the external objects? It is necessary to realize that even this temporary pleasure and happiness which we feel in contacts with the external world are derived from the Ananda which is inherent in the Atma whose very nature is Sat-Chit-Ananda. What happens in such a case is that when a desire is satisfied, the satisfaction produces at least a momentary calmness and harmonization of the mind and during this brief interval the Ananda of the Atma has an opportunity to filter down into the mind. But the joy or happiness is naturally temporary and sometimes evanescent because the desire again

makes the mind restless and disharmonized. It is only when the mind is permanently and completely calmed and harmonized that true Ananda radiates through the soul steadily and gives eternal peace. That is why we say "Shantih, Shantih, Shantih" after every prayer. Shanti or tranquillity of the mind is the most effective means of gaining permanent happiness and the peace which passeth understanding. In fact it is the only means and all the other means adopted in Sadhana only subserve this central aim.

If you realize what is the source of all happiness you will then go direct to that source instead of trying to catch its passing reflections in the objects of the outer world. If I have to obtain Rs. 1000 from an unknown source I shall go here and there to find the money. But if I know the source from which the money can be obtained I shall go direct to that source. Happiness is our birthright. We are happiness itself. We have only to know how to obtain that happiness. If the moon is shining in the sky it will give a true reflection on any surface of water which is clear and unruffled. Our mind is like a vessel containing water. If the ripples on the water are stopped, a clear reflection of the moon will be obtained instead of broken images. If the mind is made calm and unruffled permanently, a clear and permanent reflection of Atma, which is Ananda, is obtained. This is the secret of gaining abiding happiness which nothing can destroy.

We see therefore that it is desire or Kama which prevents us from gaining permanent happiness. Its instruments are spread all over the body. It works through the eyes which want to see beautiful objects. It works

through the ears which want to hear pleasant sounds and so on. How to destroy this Kama? The answer is given in the third chapter of the Gita. Bhagavan says it is easy to destroy Kama by thinking. If your mind is going towards objects of senses, first separate the Indriyas or the organs of sense from the objects. If you want to beat anybody, prevent the hand from going forward and striking the person with whom you are angry. Since the Indriyas are worked by the mind, the next step is to separate the mind from the Indriyas. Beyond the mind is the Buddhi which must be separated from the mind. Each of these is a component in the chain of action and perception, and each can be separated from the one lying external to itself until we reach the Atma which is in the background of all. In this way by a process of progressive and discriminative dissociation we can conquer Kama and find the source of everlasting happiness.

If we are travelling towards a goal we leave behind one thing after another. In the same way, when we dive deeper and deeper into our consciousness to find the Lord, we leave behind one principle after another, and the mind is one of these. It takes us to its own limit and then stops. Actually the mind itself is inert and when we are diving within the deeper layers of consciousness, it is not the mind which is the driving force but the consciousness behind the mind. That is why when the limit of the mind is crossed, the mind is dropped and the recession of consciousness can still continue. The aspect of consciousness higher than the mind takes charge.

The word 'mind' has been used in its ordinary restricted sense. In a wider sense all play of consciousness

below the realm of the Atma is within the realms of the mind. So we have to know the Truth through the mind. In Samadhi too the mind is there but it becomes one with Brahman. It becomes like transparent glass permitting light to shine through it without any obstruction. So purity is the most essential thing. If the mind is coarse it cannot reflect, or rather transmit the light of Atma. The Atma is subtler than the subtlest. So the mind should also be sensitive. The cultivation of the Divine qualities mentioned in the 16th chapter of the Bhagavad-Gita makes it pure and sensitive.

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Chapter V

DIFFERENT PATHS

To reach the Self there are several paths of Karma or action, the path of Jnana or knowledge and the path of Bhakti or love. As the temperaments vary in the case of different souls, so do the paths. But this does not mean that the aspirant can tread one path exclusively and have nothing to do with the others. Karma, Jnana and Bhakti all must go together in Sadhana although one of these will play a predominant part according to the temperament of the individual. Each of these has its own contribution to make in the progress of the Sadhaka. Karma-Yoga purifies the lower nature, gives strength and teaches the Sadhaka to work with Nishkama Bhava. Bhakti-Yoga develops love and fires the soul with the desire to find the Lord. Jnana-Yoga enables him to pierce the veils of illusion by exercising discrimination between Sat and Asat. Let us see what are the essential principles of these different paths.

KARMA MARGA - Training in Karma-Yoga begins by doing one's ordinary duties correctly and wholeheartedly. A student who goes to the examination hall well prepared is calm and happy, while another who is not prepared, is fearful and disturbed. In the same manner a person who does his duty scrupulously has self-respect and does not fear anything, while one who shirks his duties is always unhappy and disturbed. Performance of duty with

the right attitude is worship. It makes a man strong and pure. All smaller duties are to make him fit to do his greatest duty—to find the Lord and know the Truth. But a man must be strong and pure to take up that supreme duty and give up the smaller duties. It is only when a person has developed the necessary degree of Vairagya that he should renounce the world. When the fruit becomes ripe it falls of itself. Till that time comes he should continue to work in the world. He will at least be learning something. It is only through work that we get strength and acquire the capacity to do things efficiently.

The next step in Karma-Yoga is to do all work with a Nishkama Bhava; renouncing the fruit as it is called. Ordinary people do Karma, but want its fruit. Other people who have developed a little Vairagya and are not keen about the fruit, feel like renouncing the Karma itself. To be perfect in Karma-Yoga one should continue doing Karma whole-heartedly, lovingly, but renouncing completely all fruits of action. Go on offering everything to Him. Say 'Krishna-Arpanamastu' with your whole heart after everything, and then forget it completely, leaving Him to utilize the fruit as He wants.

It is necessary to remember that Nishkama Karma is not working for others, for one's wife or children or other people. Only work done for Bhagavan is real Yajna, sacrifice, and can be called Nishkama. How does one dedicate everything to Him? Does dedication consist in saying 'I dedicate everything to you O Lord'? No! The Lord is the real Actor. He makes us do all things. We are merely

His tools. I am cutting a tree with an axe. The axe is not the cutter. Know every minute and in everything that He is the real Actor. This is real Nishkama Karma. It is all a question of Bhava, attitude.

Though the Lord is in all things and is the real Actor, He is not attached. Actions do not touch Him. It is we who put the 'I' with the action and then become the actor and consequently the reaper of the fruit of the action. So do not put the 'I' in all that you do if you do not want to suffer.

You must not only know that He is the real Actor in every action but also that you cannot do anything without His will. As He does everything in reality, why not look up to him for everything? Seen in this light you have really no responsibility. So why should you take the responsibility for anything upon your own shoulders? So whatever you do, do not take the responsibility upon yourself. If you are travelling in a train it is foolish to put the luggage on your head instead of letting the train carry it for you.

BHAKTI MARGA - The path of love, it is said, is the easiest and safest of all the paths of union with God. It is extremely difficult to tread the other paths without Bhakti because human nature wants some element of *rasa* to keep up its interest in anything. If a student has no taste in mathematics it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, for him to pass an examination in that subject. On the Bhakti Marga the element of Ananda is present from the very beginning, for love and Ananda are inseparable, and where one is present the other must also be there. Sadhana on Jnana Marga is liable to degenerate into dry intellectualism

and, without Bhakti, Karma-Yoga will become merely mechanical performance of duty without love. It is only love which is perfect in itself and does not need the aid of anything else. It is because love is self-sufficient that Bhakti Marga is, to a great extent, independent of others and a true Bhakta becomes a Jnani and Yogi in due course. And what is this Bhakti? It is extreme love towards God. Those who have a natural capacity for loving are really blessed for in their case the treading of the path is very easy indeed. The current of their love emotion has merely to be diverted to the Lord. Really speaking, there is only one Love and not manifold loves. If we analyse the nature of love we shall find that all kinds of love, maternal, paternal, etc., are really different forms of the One Love which is divine. That is why it is easy to transmute all these lower forms of love into Bhakti.

If you ask me what is the most beautiful thing in the world, I should say unhesitatingly that love is the most beautiful thing. To a lover the ugliest girl becomes the most beautiful. Love makes one forget all the defects of the object which is loved and it makes the lover one with the beloved. He forgets everything else and is possessed of his beloved only. Everywhere he sees her and she sees him only. This is the nature of human love which is merely a reflection of divine love. You can, therefore, imagine to some extent what divine love will be like, to what state of bliss and exaltation it must raise the consciousness of the Bhakta. Once this divine love is born in our heart there will be no place in it for hate or jealousy. All our hankerings after the objects of the lower worlds will cease for ever. For through this divine love we draw nearer and nearer to the fountain

of Bliss - the Atma - and what need have we for things mundane, however attractive these things may appear in the eyes of the worldly people? No desire of any kind, no anger, no covetousness, no egoism and no delusion. The mind is full of love and love alone. There is no room for anything else. How can darkness even peep into a room which is full of light? All differentiations slowly fade away. Radha is within the firm clasp of Krishna. All bodily ideas disappear. There is neither Radha nor Krishna. Bliss and Bliss alone. One without a second. It is this state of Sat-Chit-Ananda to which the devotee is drawn slowly and steadily, with ease and comfort by following the Bhakti Marga.

It has been said already that different forms of love which we experience in ordinary life are really derived from the One Love which is divine. But as long as our love is scattered in several objects it cannot reach the feet of the Lord of Love. A volume of water, however great it may be, will never be able to reach the ocean if we try to take it through thousands of small and scattered canals. All the tiny streams must be combined into one mighty stream to be able to reach their destination. In the same way all our scattered loves must be combined into one single current of love and devotion if we want to reach our goal. This does not mean that we should withdraw our love from all the objects which we love in the outer world. What is needed is that we should begin to love the Lord in and through them. The wife and the son and the husband should be loved not for their sake but for the sake of the Lord who is dwelling in them.

In this way our love will gradually become universal

and also free us from bondage. On this path we have to learn to love in such a way that our love does not become a burden and does not lead to our bondage. We must use our discrimination in this matter. Knowing that we have to leave all those whom we love, our son, brother, wife, etc., we should love them wisely which means that we should love everybody as an embodiment of God. But we can really do so only when we can see the God within us; when we can separate ourselves from our bodies and are conscious of our Atma. In reality, nobody loves the son, wife, etc., but only the Atma, the Self within himself. As Kapila told Devahuti, there are three kinds of Bhakti:

(1) **Tamasic** - This involves offering of sacrifices etc. Trying to please God through practices which involve hate and destruction is Tamasic Bhakti of the lowest kind.

(2) **Rajasic** - This is based upon personal desires and their fulfilment. A person loves and worships God not for His sake but in order to gain from Him worldly things which he wants.

(3) **Sattvic** - In this the Bhakta loves God not to gain anything from Him but for love's sake. All his Karmas are dedicated to the Lord; are performed as Yajnas. The characteristic of this kind of Bhakti is that there is no fear, no shame, no bargaining. But there is still separation from the Beloved.

The above three kinds of Bhakti are of the Saguna variety. The highest kind of Bhakti is known as Nirguna Bhakti. In this the mind goes straight to the Lord and there is no break. The current of devotion flows continuously to

His lotus feet as the Ganges flows continuously to the ocean. There is no reason, *hetu*, for loving the Lord. He wants to have the privilege of serving the Lord out of sheer love. He does not even want the four kinds of Mukti in return. This is the ultimate form which love for the Lord assumes on the Bhakti Marga. Through this kind of Bhakti the devotee gets the knowledge of the Self. He passes beyond the three Gunas. He becomes one with the Lord. Although he does not want liberation, he is already free. He has no wants. All his needs are supplied by the Lord. He has no use for Siddhis but all Siddhis are at his beck and call.

How to create this divine love in us? This is a different problem. The development of *apara bhakti* is generally the result of prolonged and one-pointed Sadhana and is preceded by lower forms of Bhakti, but a few general hints may be given here: Associate with the blessed and the pure, the Mahapurushas who are the embodiments of divine love. Hear from them about the Lord and His love for His devotees. Serve them and gain their Kripa. Yearn for divine love and pray unceasingly to the Lord to give you His Bhakti, pure and unselfish. As one desires, so he gets. God is not callous and indifferent. He is mercy incarnate. He knows what we are seeking. The moment He knows we are hungry for His love and are seeking Him and Him alone, He will give us the blessings of Bhakti to our heart's content. When he does not hear our prayers the fault is ours. We are only talking about Bhakti and Mukti. Our prayers are false, and insincere, not from the heart. The impurity of our heart and mind is the stumbling block in our way. So let us find out our weak points with an impartial mind and exert ourselves

to the utmost to eradicate them one by one. Let us pray to Him sincerely and whole-heartedly to give us unceasing love for His lotus feet and to abide within our heart and mind for ever and ever. If we are sincere, and do our utmost to make ourselves fitting vessels for His divine love, the fountain of love will sooner or later open within our heart and fill it with bliss.

JNANA MARGA - The treading of Jnana Marga begins when a man starts thinking deeply about the problems of life and tries to free himself from the illusions by which the mind is dominated. It has already been mentioned in a previous chapter that we live in a world of Maya and imagine what the Lord of Maya imagines. Our duty is to dehypnotize ourselves and see the Lord who is producing this illusion. Thinking deeply about the great mystery of life will gradually unveil the mystery and destroy the illusion or *moha* in which all of us are involved. One may have theoretical knowledge of all the Vedas and philosophies but unless he takes to Vichara it is of no use. Vichara is thinking deeply about the Real and the unreal, Sat and Asat. If a man meditates on Sat and Asat he is bound to reject gradually all that is Asat and find the Sat.

What is Sat? That which is real, always existing, without any change, without any modification, increase or decrease. The whole universe is changing every moment; therefore it cannot be Sat or Real. Whatever you see cannot be Real although you are taking it as Real. Even the body which appears to us so real is not real at all - it is constantly changing and may perish in the very next moment. This is called Avidya. We take as real and permanent what is unreal

and impermanent and therefore we suffer. What fools we are (even though we may be intellectual fools) to imagine that all the things by which we are surrounded are 'mine' while they may be taken away from us at any time. Only that can be 'mine' which can remain with me always. All our suffering is therefore, due to confusion of thought with regard to these fundamental things. It is due to Avidya or lack of right perception or right knowledge. The remedy is therefore Knowledge or Jnana.

How to find this Knowledge? Know what you are. Who is this 'I'? Our Rishis wanted to know the cause of everything. How do we see? How do we hear? Through the mind. And, who makes the mind perceive? There must be somebody above the mind, directing it, making it perceive through the sense organs. The real seer must be above the body, mind, even above Buddhi. He must remain the same in Jagrat, Svapna and Sushupti states. So you try to find the Seer, and know that you are that Seer. This is the greatest of sciences - the Science of the Self. In this Science, you have to go within yourself. If you are searching for a treasure which is kept in a box locked up in a room, can you find that treasure by searching for it everywhere outside? You will have to unlock the door and open the box. Then only you will be able to get at the treasure. So go inside yourself to find the Great Secret. Hear about the Truth from those who know it, and then leaving everything, practise Tapasya and meditate constantly. What is seen in the dream state cannot exist in the true Self. Those who want to know the Truth should try to renounce everything in the unreal and make the utmost effort to realize the Sat

which alone exists, by both analytic and synthetic methods. Take hold of that which exists eternally. If you peel the trunk of a plantain tree, only the core remains ultimately. In the same way if you put away all things in the unreal by a process of *neti, neti*, only the Truth remains. So peel off the five sheaths and the three states of consciousness and ultimately only the Seer will remain. He alone is real, all else is unreal. That is the only way to know the Truth by following the Jnana Marga. You can know God only by *becoming* God. The Atma cannot be known by weaklings but only by those who are strong, who are prepared to give up Asat when they see it.

It is possible to know the Great Truth which is hidden behind the manifested universe because that same Truth is hidden within the human heart. The universe is a macrocosm while the human soul is a microcosm. We can know the nature of the macrocosm by knowing the microcosm. We can know the property of the whole by studying the property of the part. By tasting a little water of the ocean we can know what the ocean tastes like. Let us take our own body as the microcosm. Is there anything in it which is permanent, which is real, which can be called Sat? Think! No, there is not. How do you see your body? Through the eyes. How do the eyes work? Through the mind. Is there anything which is permanent, real, in this ever-changing mind? No! So you go on discriminating between Sat and Asat, discarding one principle after another until you arrive at *That* within you which never changes, which remains the same, *eka-rasa*, under all conditions. That is your Atma, Sat, the object of your search. This Atma within you is one in essence with the Paramatma

which pervades the whole universe. When a person has removed everything which is false and untrue, and grasped the great Truth which is another name for God, he realizes that there is no birth or death, no 'I' or 'mine'. He becomes a Master and knows his Divinity. In his case the bud of the soul has unfolded and the Divine flower of Self-realization has appeared. He has not gained anything new which was not there all the time. He was like a man searching for a necklace which was on his neck all the time, or like the deer which searches for the *kasturi* everywhere while it is within him all the time. Then he realizes for the first time the true value of all objects in the world of the unreal. If you put a thousand zeros in a line these are without any value. Put '1' before them and then every zero acquires a value according to its position in the line. So it is the '1' which gives a value to the zeros. In the same way it is the Atma or the Self which gives value and meaning to all the objects in the manifested world.

It is only when you know your Atma that you can know what your wife, your son, or your Guru, really means.

Many people wonder why we are made to go through the evolutionary cycle involving so much suffering before we attain perfection through Self-realization. It is useless to worry over this problem and find an answer to it in the realm of Maya. Take it for granted that the whole universe has been created by God. But what we are concerned with is not this universe but the world of illusion that we have created by all the means that our mind can devise. We cannot be free until we destroy this world of ours which we have created. It is in our own hands. At this very moment

we can destroy this world and be free. If you hold a thing on your palm which gives you pain, who is to be blamed if you do not throw it away?

If you are sincere and want to know the cause of all things then go ahead and seek the cause. You will find ultimately that He alone exists and is the ultimate cause of the universe. For knowing these things you will have to destroy your world and the ego who has created it. This created universe can exist only on the plane of Maya. When you go beyond this plane of Maya there is no creation, no destruction, no time, no space. Whatever exists really must exist always, eternally. That is Sat.

You adopt means pertaining to the world of unreality in order to remove the veil of unreality. You take a thorn to remove a thorn and then throw away both. All the means used in Sadhana are also unreal but they are used to remove the overall unreality. When the Real is known there is neither the world, nor bondage, nor Sadhana. Only He the eternal Sat, the Ultimate Truth, remains. So you will see that the only way to know the nature of the universe, which is the macrocosm, is to know yourself, the microcosm.

In dealing with the question of different paths it is necessary to say a few words by way of warning those who adopt the different practices of Yoga indiscriminately either after reading books or under the guidance of the so-called Yogis who have superficial knowledge of ordinary Yogic practices. Many people have ruined their lives by practising Pranayama without proper guidance and without

observing the necessary conditions. Pranayama is useful if it is practised moderately and in the proper way. But one must practise celibacy, must regulate his food and should lead a life of strict moderation and self-control. The brain is a very fine instrument and can be easily deranged by the indiscriminate use of the so-called Yogic practices.

In Hatha-Yoga attention is directed mostly to the physical body. By controlling the physical body it is possible to do many things which appear wonderful and to prolong life. But what is the use of all these things for one who wants to know the Lord and be free?

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Chapter VI

WHAT IS RELIGION - SANATANA DHARMA

It will be seen from what has been said above with regard to the cause of suffering and the only effective means of putting an end to it that real religion does not consist in merely going through certain prescribed practices in a mechanical fashion. Religion in the true sense is that which helps us to manifest the divinity in us more and more. As we have seen, the true and innermost nature within us is divine. It is like a fire hidden beneath the ashes of our lower nature. We have only to remove the ashes and the fire will blaze forth in all its intensity and glory. The Lord is hidden within our heart as if behind a veil. We have only to remove the veil to have His Darshan.

The Hindu religion is not to be taken as a code of conduct given by some individual teacher. It should be considered as the expression of an eternal law which pervades every aspect of our life. That is why it is called Sanatana Dharma - Eternal Religion. It is like the Law of Gravitation which governs the phenomena of the physical world. The Law of Gravitation has been in existence since the very beginning of manifestation. It is inherent in the very existence of the physical world. Whether people know it or are ignorant of it does not affect its influence on the phenomena of nature. Newton merely discovered this law and helped mankind to explain natural phenomena and

utilize it for gaining certain ends. Without a knowledge of this law many scientific discoveries could not have been made.

In the same way, Sanatana Dharma or Eternal Religion has existed since the very beginning of manifestation. It is inherent in the very nature of the physical and superphysical worlds and governs life in all its aspects. Our Rishis have merely discovered different aspects of this great all-pervading Law and incorporated it in our Srutis and Smritis. They made these discoveries by diving deeper and deeper within themselves in order to find out the ultimate Truth of existence. As different religions which have appeared in the world from time to time have given humanity different aspects of the One Truth, they may be compared to rivers which are derived from the ocean and after flowing on land again fall into the ocean.

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Chapter VII

**INTENSITY OF DESIRE THROUGH
VIVEKA AND VICHARA**

Many people who are interested in religion have some yearning for the spiritual life but this yearning is vague, indefinite and very weak. It is the intensity of desire which alone can bring about realization. Theoretically we can become free in a moment if we can make ourselves quite free from worldly desires but in actual life we have to gradually intensify our desire for God until it takes possession of our mind completely. We must have the real hunger, deep and constant longing for His Darshan. How is that hunger created and intensified? This is the fruit of intense Sadhana extending over a long period of time. But before we can practise Sadhana with determination and one-pointedness there is some preliminary work to be done. And in this preparatory work Viveka and Vichara play a great part.

In the first place we must realize by observation, reading and reflection the utter worthlessness of our aims and achievements in the external world. We must consider very earnestly and critically what we have been able to get from the pursuit of our worldly aims. Have money, name and fame, wife and children, physical comforts and enjoyments brought us any real and abiding happiness, peace of mind and inner strength? We shall find on a

critical analysis of our achievements that our gain has been really zero and we have been merely following the mirage of worldly happiness. It is all a question of thinking earnestly and enquiring honestly. Out of this kind of thinking and constant reflection will come the right state of mind in which there are Viveka and Vairagya. People sometimes ask, 'How can we discriminate between the Real and unreal when we do not know the Real?' Destroy the unreal (Asat) world by constant observation and reflection on the nature of life and its limitations and illusions. When you realize truly the changing and illusory nature of the world you live in, you cannot remain attached to it. So think and think constantly. What is the nature of this unreal world? What is Truth? What is the goal of life? How to reach that goal? It is true that mere thinking is not of much avail. You must search and work. But you cannot search earnestly without deep thinking and coming to clear-cut conclusions. How can those who do not think over these fundamental problems solve them satisfactorily? What is the use of intelligence? To put it to use and find the Truth. For only the man who exercises his intelligence can solve the great riddle of life. To run constantly after the temporary pleasures of the world and to be indifferent to the source of all bliss within us is sheer foolishness. Vasishtha said it was easier to realize the Atma within us than to pluck a flower. Why? Because in order to pluck a flower we have to put forth our hand and make an effort. But to realize the Atma we have only to look within. The Truth is already within us. We have only to find it. To destroy the unreal world by thinking and reflection is the negative aspect of the preparatory work which has to be done. The positive aspect is to try to

visualize the tremendous value of achieving our goal of spiritual life. We must try to realize the significance of what we gain when we are established in our real Self whose nature is Sat-Chit-Ananda. If anyone were to gain the slightest realization of what it means to reach the goal of spiritual life and find God, he would throw away everything in the outer world and simply run towards the goal. The real difficulty in the case of most Sadhakas is that this vivid realization of the tremendous nature of Self-realization is absent and their ideas are confused. That is why they make only half-hearted efforts and are easily discouraged. Our ideas with regard to what we want should be quite clear. Our objective must be clearly defined. The students who pass an examination have clear ideas. Those who fail have confused ideas. We must also not allow ourselves to change our objective. We must have *sthira-nischaya*: It is only then that we can devote ourselves whole-heartedly to the search.

In considering the question of intensifying the desire to find God we may enquire as to how the desire for a worldly object is created and intensified. An ordinary man with worldly ambitions hears about the life of a governor. He learns that the governor gets Rs. 5,000 as his salary. He lives in a palatial building, has thousands of people under his command. The more he thinks and visualizes the life of a governor the more intense becomes his desire to become a governor. In the same way, by hearing about God and the glory and bliss of Self-realization from the lips of Mahatmas, the desire to find Him is created and intensified.

That is why the Lord says in the Gita, "*Think of Me alone, then you will come to live in Me alone.*" No money is required for thinking constantly of Him, no outer help is needed. And that is the easiest way to get out of the worldly difficulties also. If you start thinking of the Lord with devotion and earnestness you have put yourself on the way to become free from all worries. If we depend on Him completely and unreservedly, He supplies all our real needs, both in the outer and the inner worlds. But a fool does not take *kheer* which is in his hand and goes about asking for alms everywhere.

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Chapter VIII

SADHANA

Theoretical knowledge with regard to religion is not of much use if the aspirant does not put into practice what he has learnt. He may know all the Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures by heart but if he does not follow the injunctions given therein, he will remain in darkness and continue to suffer. It is by practice alone that we not only advance on the path of spiritual unfoldment but even understand the hidden real meanings of the books which constitute our scriptures. An aspirant may commit to memory the whole of the Bhagavad Gita but if he does not make an effort to practise its teachings he will not be able to understand it in the real sense of the term. Even such a simple book as the Bhagavata remains really closed to a person unless he tries to practise Tapasya and develop love. So it is Sadhana which unlocks the door leading to spiritual knowledge contained in our scriptures. Religion is not really a question of acquiring theoretical knowledge but of *Being and Becoming*.

Many people have doubts in their mind as to whether the efforts that they make to reform themselves are of any use. They are obsessed with the idea of Prarabdha or predestination. There is no such thing as a fixed destiny. We are merely reaping the fruits of what we have sown. We are given opportunities again and again of working out

our evil Karmas and changing our undesirable tendencies. The struggle between the good and evil tendencies is like a fight between two goats. The stronger will drive back the weaker. Take refuge in Krishna and let His strength be on your side to fight the evil tendencies. Take Him as your charioteer. If you take responsibilities on your own shoulders, if you put faith in your own little strength, then you are lost.

In dealing with the subject of Sadhana we have to consider the mental and moral qualities which must be developed by the Sadhaka, and the practices which should be adopted, in order to develop these essential qualities. The "divine" qualities which have to be developed by the Yogi are given in the sixteenth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita :

अभयं सत्त्वसंशुद्धिर्ज्ञानयोगव्यवस्थितिः ।

दानं दमश्च यज्ञश्च स्वाध्यायस्तप आर्जवम् ॥१॥

अहिंसा सत्यमक्रोधस्त्यागः शान्तिरपैशुनम् ।

दया भूतेष्वलोलुप्त्वं मार्दवं ह्रीरचापलम् ॥२॥

तेजः क्षमा धृतिः शौचमद्रोहो नातिमानिता ।

भवन्ति संपदं दैवीमभिजातस्य भारत ॥३॥

Bhagavan Kapila gave the following instructions to Devahuti in the Bhagavata: (1) Do your duty whole-heartedly but without caring for the results. (2) Do Puja but it should not be harmful to anybody. (3) Do not wound the feelings of anybody. (4) Go to the sacred places. (5) Do Namaskaras. (6) See God in all creatures. (7) Do not be attached to anybody or anything. (8) Try to keep your mind

in the highest state all the time. (9) Worship those who are Great. (10) Have love and sympathy for those who are poor. (11) Be friends with all. (12) Observe Yama and Niyama. (13) Always hear the sacred Texts. (14) Repeat My names and Mantras. (15) Be straightforward. (16) Always mix with good people. (17) Be free from Ahankara. Then only the mind will become absolutely pure and fit for Bhakti. The Sadhaka will find the qualifications for spiritual enlightenment described in different ways by different teachers but they are fundamentally the same and a few of these may be discussed briefly in the following paragraphs.

Sincerity - We must be sincere in all things - in action, thought and speech. Without sincerity nothing can be achieved in spiritual life while with sincerity everything will come in due time. Sincerity means not only that our thoughts and feelings should correspond with our outer actions but also that our efforts must be earnest and whole-hearted. Doing things in a routine manner or from mere habit without the proper attitude and feeling does not produce much effect. Tulsidas disliked insincerity and has, therefore, warned again and again against *kapat* in mind, body and speech. We must be truthful. Is it easier to tell a truth, or a lie? Many people are telling lies all the time under the mistaken notion that they can get out of difficulties easily in this way. Most lawyers spend so much time and energy in inventing lies to win their cases. They build up elaborate arguments which take hours and days to prepare while the simple truth can be told in a few minutes. It is far easier to live a life of truth than that of falsehood. In the same way spiritual life based on truth and sincerity is really far easier

to live than the life of hypocrisies, conventionalities and artificialities based on falsehoods. It appears more difficult because we see the problems of life through haze of desires and our mind is clouded by delusion.

Faith - Faith is not mere belief. It is a great dynamic power and no progress in spiritual life is possible without *Sraddha* or faith. Whatever you do, do with *Sraddha*, or not at all. Whatever is done without *Sraddha*, is useless. If you give anything in charity without *Sraddha*, it is useless. If you do intense *Tapasya* in the Himalayas without *Sraddha*, it is useless. If you do *Upasana* without *Sraddha*, it is useless. The want of *Sraddha* is ruining the world.

Faith and knowledge increase *pari passu*. Without real knowledge there can be no real faith, but a little faith gives some knowledge and this increases the faith to some extent. So these two go on reinforcing each other until true knowledge and true faith are born. Faith can become *pucca* only through real experience.

Renunciation - Why is it necessary to renounce? Why not eat, drink and be merry? The difficulty lies in the fact that one cannot be really merry or happy until one has risen above *Vishaya-Bhoga*. Everyone wants to be happy but there is only one way to be happy—to search for happiness inside oneself. Do not run after the pleasures of the senses. Resist the tendency. Everything outside is temporary and perishing. Why place your mind and heart on those things which may be taken away any moment? They alone are intelligent who resist the temptation and keep the mind unattached. All others who are running after the illusory and perishing objects of the world are fools,

though they may be very learned and intellectual and may consider themselves very wise. Real happiness can come only through peace and there can be no peace without complete renunciation. The wise man is utterly unattached and he is always with the Lord. In a way all of us are with the Lord, but not consciously.

We must be quite clear in our mind with regard to the necessity of renunciation. It is absolutely necessary to renounce all worldly aims and desires before we can realize God. The temptations of the worldly life are due to our ignorance. If I know the worthlessness of these worldly objects I will have no attraction for them, but if I attach importance to them they will continue to tempt me. God has given us wisdom. Why do you not open your eyes and see, and renounce naturally? The renunciation must be total with no mental reservations and no holding back of particular things to safeguard our security. Internal renunciation is more important than external renunciation, but without external renunciation we are apt to delude ourselves and think we have *Tyaga* while in reality we are attached.

Another important fact to be borne in mind is that renunciation comes first, then realization. In the outer life we generally try to get a more desirable thing before giving up a less desirable thing, but in spiritual life we must have faith and renounce joyfully because we have full confidence in the laws of nature and the bounty of God.

Self-surrender - This brings us to another important virtue which must be developed by the *Bhākta*—and that is *ananyata*. You must develop the habit of depending upon

the Lord for everything. Even for fighting disease and removing our worldly difficulties we must depend upon Him completely. It is difficult, but we can slowly develop this habit and make ourselves quite free from worldly worries. This does not mean that we should be praying for all the trifling things we may need in daily life. The wise man does not want anything from God because he knows that whatever God does is the best for him under the circumstances. But if we have not yet reached that level of faith and non-attachment and there is some serious trouble in our life, it is better to pray to God and depend upon Him for removing our difficulty than adopting our own self-devised means of removing the difficulty. After all He is our Father and there is nothing wrong in asking our Father for anything we need.

The ordinary man cannot depend upon God in this manner because he has not got the necessary faith and his mind is full of worldly desires but the man who wants the Lord's grace and *Bhakti* must learn to depend upon Him completely. It is difficult for the householder to adopt this attitude but it can be done by training our mind with perseverance. The householder's life should be taken as a battlefield in which we have to fight our lower nature constantly and develop the necessary strength and purity. If you want to develop *ananyata* quickly, then go to a solitary place, away from civilization. See how all your needs are supplied at the right time by His unseen hand. Then only will you know His greatness, His power, His solicitude for His devotees. When you have experiences of this kind then you will be able to depend upon Him under all circumstances. The ordinary man has no knowledge of His

power. He does not know that everything in our life comes from Him whether we know this or not. That is why he cannot depend upon Him. But the Bhakta must have *ananyata*.

Desirelessness - For the Sadhaka the idea of mine and thine (possessiveness) must disappear. Rama and kama cannot remain together. The idea of mine should be associated only with *That* which is really mine. As all things else are transitory and given to us only for a brief period, it is foolish to regard them as ours and to develop attachment towards them. You should consider God alone as yours because He is your innermost Self and can always remain with you. Only those who are *nirmoha* and *nirahamkara* can get Shanti. So give up all attachments in the outer world and develop attachment to Him only. A deer runs after a mirage because it is a beast and has no Buddhi. But God has given us Buddhi and we should not, like a beast, run after the illusory attractions while the very source of all bliss is hidden within us.

Transmutation of Energy - Energy must find expression in some form whether it is physical, emotional or mental. To transmute and raise it to a higher level we have to dam it at lower levels. The energy of our desires is finding expression in the pursuit of all kinds of things in the outer world. In order that we may want the Lord and the Lord alone, we must give up wanting the things of the lower world. This may temporarily create a void in our life but if we persevere with determination and do not allow ourselves to slide back, the energy thus dammed will appear sooner or later in the form of intense desire for the Lord, which is known as *Mumuksha*. It is easy to transmute energy,

provided it is there. One has only to change its direction. It is more difficult to reform where there is lack of desire. In that case the obstruction to the free flow of energy must be removed first. One of the ways in which physical and emotional energy is wasted is through sex. That is why Brahmacharya is a *sine qua non* of spiritual life.

Brahmacharya - These days there is no Brahmacharyashrama. Boys and girls marry without any kind of training in *self-control* and even without any knowledge of what is good or bad for them. Brahmacharya is the weapon with which one should equip himself or herself before entering the battlefield of Grihasthashrama. It is only then that one can live the life of a householder with self-control which brings freedom and strength. Our Sastras give definite rules; certain days are mentioned, e.g. Ekadasi, Purnima, etc., when the husband is not to go to his wife. What does this mean? It means that he is to learn to exercise self-restraint. Even if his passions are clamouring for gratification he will have to practise restraint in order to follow these rules and be an ideal Grihastha. The institution of marriage is not only for procreation but also for giving training in self-control. Nobody can be happy or strong without self-control. You can really enjoy life only when you are masters of your lower nature and are not slavishly attached. There must be a wise attachment and at the same time detachment. It is only then that you can live in freedom. Why do you put this 'my', 'my' on everything with which you come in contact? Your wife or husband may leave you the very next moment and you will be heart-broken if you are attached.

People often come to me in a miserable condition, husband and wife with many children. Their life is a hell. The health of the wife is ruined, the children are weaklings and the husband is wailing because he cannot bear the burden of an ailing wife and so many children. He cannot even feed them properly. All joy disappears from such a life.

If we pause and think we shall find that exercise of self-control can remove all these troubles. To husband and wife as individuals restraint would give strength of body and mind, and for the family as a whole it would mean economic security and freedom from worries. Every exercise of self-control brings with it added strength of body and mind, whereas everytime one succumbs to one's habits and desires, he becomes weaker. If the husband and wife lead a properly regulated life, Grihasthashramia can become a heaven. In it they get the privilege of helping the needy and serving the Sadhus and Sannyasis. They can worship the Lord and offer Puja to the Devis and Devatas. They can practise Sadhana and try to understand the great problems of life and know the Lord. It is our own weakness and lack of self-control which is generally the cause of our troubles but we do not try to understand this and put the blame on Grihasthashrama. If we use our intelligence and try to be an ideal Grihastha we will have peace and joy even in poverty and all our problems will vanish.

One must practise self-control from the very beginning. If we allow the mind to do what it likes, we shall gradually become its slave. We must have strength. Through the practice of self-control one becomes a master

of his mind and senses. Who is a real conqueror? Napoleon? Hitler? No! He who has conquered his own mind.

When life in the Brahmacharya and Grihasthashramas has been lived properly and full self-control has been acquired, then life in the next two stages of Vanaprastha and Sannyasa becomes easy and full of bliss. A strong foundation is needed for a tall building; otherwise it will come tumbling down as soon as a strong wind strikes against it. The superstructure of one's spiritual life can be built only on the strong foundation of Brahmacharya.

Ahimsa - Ahimsa is of three kinds : (1) Spiritual (2) Mental and (3) Physical. God exists in all creatures. How can anybody injure another creature if he really believes in the immanence of God ? If you hate anybody you really hate the Lord who is seated in his heart. If you injure anybody you produce evil Karma for yourself. The real Bhakta worships God in every creature and it is therefore impossible for him to harm anybody, even those who harm him. People understand physical and mental Himśa. But spiritual Himśa is the worst. Not to do anything for your spiritual unfoldment is spiritual Himśa. Whatever takes you to the feet of the Lord is the important thing. If you do not do anything for becoming free, then observing Ahimsa in the external things will not be of much avail and will not succeed to any great extent. For, unless a person has the right attitude of reverence towards all creatures, and considers them embodiments of the Lord, how can he practise Ahimsa amidst the turmoils and conflicts of daily

life where people try to harm and injure him? If he has the right attitude and sees God in everything, then all conflict and hostility will cease in his presence.

The deliberate cultivation of the qualities dealt with in the previous paragraphs is one aspect of Sadhana. Another important aspect is the adoption of practices which develop devotion to the Lord and make the mind pure and sensitive to receive the light of Truth. These may all be summed up in Upasana or worship. The particular means adopted in Upasana will depend upon the temperament of the individual and the stage reached by him. The beginner who is new to the work will take naturally to prayer and in this way gradually make his outward-turned consciousness inward-turned. The advanced Sadhaka who has real Vairagya will like to go to a solitary place and spend all his time in Japa and meditation. The Bhakta would like to concentrate his mind on the form of Bhagavan and His Lilas. The Jnani would like to dive deeper and deeper into his own consciousness and remove, one by one, all the veils which hide the light of Truth. Both reach the same goal ultimately but by different methods. It is not what practices a Sadhaka adopts, but the spirit of devotion and intensity of desire with which he goes through them, which is important. Let us take prayer for example :

Prayer - Prayer is very effective in Sadhana. It is the complete opening of your heart before the Lord, keeping nothing back, hiding nothing. But it should be sincere if it is to be effective. Hypocrisy and insincerity completely nullify the effect of prayer. We must remember that the Lord is All-Intelligence and we cannot deceive Him by any means.

He sees into the deepest recesses of our heart and nothing can be hidden from Him. The Lord knows only one language, the language of the heart. If you offer false prayers, who will hear them? It is a waste of energy. Be true to yourself. Do not pretend. Another important thing to remember in this connection is that when you pray you must become one-pointed. The mind must be full of Him and Him alone. If the mind is completely occupied by thoughts and emotions about Him, no other thoughts can enter it. Practise prayer like that :

Even if you have not much Bhakti in the beginning, if you pray sincerely, help will come both from outside and inside. Pray for Bhakti like Meera and Tulsidas with your full heart. The Lord is bound to hear you. Of course we have also to keep a constant watch over our mind so that no impure thought is allowed to enter. We have to make constant efforts to put our ideals into practice. If we pray sincerely, the Lord immediately lifts us above temptations. Prayer is the most effective means of conquering temptation and fighting our weaknesses. But the prayer must be intense and sincere, and there should be real desire and effort to remove all our weaknesses from our character.

Meditation - Prayer, Japa and other practices of this nature gradually lead the Sadhaka to the stage where he can take up the advanced practice of meditation. Meditation in the spiritual sense means the process of directing the mind to the Lord. The whole mind must be put at the feet of the Lord. If your mind is running after worldly things how can you meditate? The energies of the mind are being scattered all the time on hundreds of objects. Desires for money, name and physical comforts are dragging you down

all the time. The mind cannot be concentrated under these circumstances. When there are no attachments the mind is at peace and then you can meditate easily.

People come to me often and express their desire to reach the stage of Samadhi with my help. They have an entirely mistaken notion about Samadhi. They want to have Samadhi while hugging all the worldly desires and Vāsānas. They want this world as well as the other world, which is impossible. It is just like a person wanting to hear good music and see dancing while a thick wall separates him from the artistes. He must first break down the wall if he is in earnest. Samadhi can be attained only after all the desires have been renounced, all the attachments torn asunder and the mind brought to a condition of complete rest. This requires a long period of preparation and hard continuous training of the mind, and it will thus be seen how futile is the desire of the ordinary worldly-minded people to jump into the state of Samadhi with all their desires and worldly thoughts still sticking to them.

It will be seen therefore that we cannot reach the goal suddenly. We must make a beginning. We must start giving time to these things. Let us not postpone tackling the problem of life until circumstances are more favourable, until we retire and have more leisure. By that time the body has become infirm and habits have become crystalized. People who keep on postponing the quest for Truth until old age and other troubles overtake them are like the fool who starts digging a well when the house is on fire.

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Chapter IX

SAGUNA AND NIRGUNA UPASANA

Our Rishis were compassionate. They not only found God but wanted to lead the masses also to His lotus feet. How could they do it by representing God in the abstract? So they gave the masses concrete forms for worship. They also gave the simple truths of the spiritual life along with the stories. You find that after every incident described in the story, the underlying truth sought to be expressed in the story is also given. We have in the Ramayana and Bhagavata and other Puranas also a mixture of stories and truths, dovetailing into one another. The mind gets more and more concentrated on account of the interest aroused by the story and is then led naturally to the underlying truth.

Saguna and Nirguna Upasana are essentially the same, only Saguna Upasana is easier. There is something to take hold of. Even in ordinary life we teach children arithmetic with the help of concrete things. So a 'form' is absolutely necessary in the early stages. Also beautiful stories connected with the form. By simply thinking of a form we do not get much. But by thinking of the incidents connected with the life of Rama and Krishna our devotion is aroused. Ordinary people are incapable of thinking of abstract things but they can concentrate their mind easily on a beautiful form and forget material things for the time

is spiritually asleep provided the man follows the advice of the Guru. He can light the lamps of thousands of people who are *adhikaris*. He can destroy the accumulated Vasanas of several lives as a heap of timber can be destroyed by a lighted match. But such a Guru is difficult to find.

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतदेवानुग्रहहेतुकम् ।
मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥

It is only when the aspirant is sincere in his search and has intense desire to find God that such a Guru appears. In fact it is God who really appears in the form of a Guru. God is attracted by love alone. He is bound by love alone, nothing else.

In order that a Sadhaka may derive the full benefit of contact with such a Mahapurusha he should remember a few facts which play an important role in the *Guru-chela* relationship.

In the first place, the *chela* must have full faith or *Sraddha* in his Guru. He must take the Guru as the sole guide. He must not run from one teacher to another as many Sadhakas are in the habit of doing. If a person has to dig a well in order to find water he must concentrate on one selected spot and dig persistently until the water is struck. If he changes the spot frequently and digs at different places he will never find water. It is true that in the initial stage the *chela* does not know much about the greatness of his Guru as he himself is undeveloped. But as he serves the Guru with devotion and faith, and his inner vision begins

to open, he acquires a direct and intimate knowledge of the real powers, love and knowledge of his Guru. Then his devotion to his Guru is not based on faith but on direct experience and nothing can shake it. But, for reaching this stage, *Sraddha* is needed, whole-hearted devotion is needed, service is needed, complete dependence, *ananyata*, on the Guru is needed. You must trust your Guru utterly and surrender all that you have to him. You must throw wide open unto him all the doors of your heart and keep nothing hidden and secret. The sun can illuminate a room only if it is open. How can it illuminate a room into which its rays can find no entrance? That is why all great Teachers have laid great stress on devotion and service. But the service must be whole-hearted, true, pure and sincere. Where the *chela* has the right attitude he is slowly, steadily, but unceasingly, transformed and becomes more and more like his preceptor, the God-man.

The second important factor which plays a great part in the relationship between the Guru and *chela* is personal contact. There is a stone known as *paras* (*sparsamani*) in Hindu mythology which turns copper into gold. But the stone must touch the copper. Keeping them apart will not produce the result. So contact between the Guru and *chela*, or Satsang, is necessary. Then the disciple becomes not gold but *paras* itself. It need hardly be mentioned that it is not merely physical contact but the contact of the heart and mind which brings about the transformation in the *chela*. It is the attitude of the disciple towards his master, the Bhava, which determines the flow of power. Not only reverence and love are necessary but also obedience and selfless

service. The *chela* must feel that all that he is getting and the progress that he is making on the path of spirituality is due to the unbounded grace of his Guru. Differences of opinion do not matter, even opposition does not matter, provided the disciple is convinced that he is fighting for a principle. The Sadguru, who is compassionate, will understand and not take offence. Rather, he will be pleased that the disciple has the courage to stand for the right. But there must be sincerity, truthfulness and determination to do the right.

There is some misconception in the minds of people about Guru-kripa or grace. It is true that spirituality can be transmitted from the Guru to the *chela* as definitely as money can be transmitted from a rich to a poor man. But this transmission is not accidental or arbitrary depending merely upon asking on the part of the *chela*. The disciple has to work out his own salvation. He must develop the necessary qualifications before he can hope to get Guru-kripa. Guru-kripa is really the result of efforts on the part of the disciple. Effort does not mean only positive deeds of service but also includes development of the right attitude such as self-surrender. Self-surrender is not a negative quality as is generally supposed. It has tremendous power and requires great and persistent effort, but it can bring down Guru-kripa like any other effort, in the field of Sadhana. In order to understand the nature of Guru-kripa and its transmission, we may take the analogy of the flow of water. Water always flows from a higher to a lower level, never in the reverse direction. So there must be humility, *deena-bhava*. If one does not care for the power, or does

not adopt the attitude of self-surrender, how can there be the flow of power? If there is *deena-bhava* then everything else will follow and even obstructions will be removed. So the disciple has first to deserve and then desire. Qualifications are necessary. Training is necessary. Even the finding of a Sadguru depends upon one's Karma. Many people wonder whether faith in the Guru alone suffices. They are afraid of being exploited or of being misguided. Although there is the possibility of one's being exploited by an ordinary guru who does not possess the requisite qualifications, still we must remember that we live in a world governed by Law and we get generally what we deserve. If a Sadhaka is perfectly sincere and has intense desire for finding God, there is hardly any possibility of his falling into the hands of an unscrupulous person. Things do not happen by chance but according to an overruling Law known as Karma. If a Sadhaka is perfectly sincere and has intense faith in his Guru then he will be able to get from his Guru what he needs even though the Guru may not, in the ordinary sense, be competent to help him. For, all help comes from God really, and God will send whatever help he needs even though the instrument may not be an ideal one. Besides, the more our mind becomes pure the greater is the power of Viveka and with a discriminating mind it is not possible for us to choose an undesirable person as our Guru. It is only unscrupulous people who generally come across unscrupulous gurus. Another difficulty which aspirants feel is with regard to what may be called divided loyalty to the Guru and *Ishta-deva*. Is the Sadhaka to direct his devotion to God, or his Guru, or to both? In this matter

the disciple is to be guided solely by the advice of his Guru and he should do exactly what the Guru asks him to do. The Guru knows the nature of the *chela* and the potentialities present in him much better than the *chela* himself does and even though the advice given by the Guru may not appear palatable or right it will be found, in the long run, to be the best under the circumstances. Besides, this difficulty of directing the devotion to both, the Ishta-deva and the Guru is based upon a misconception with regard to their nature, and the relation between them. There is really no difference between the two. The Sadguru is really an embodiment of the Ishta-deva and should be regarded as such. Then there will be no question of divided loyalties. We worship God in stone images. Why cannot we worship Him in a living image which the Guru is? God wants our whole heart: *Bhavapriyo hi Madhavah*. You may worship Him in any way, but should do so with your whole heart.

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MY REMINISCENCES OF SWAMI BRAHMANANDA

— By Swami Purushottamananda

When I was a student some 14 years old I heard the name of Sri Ramakrishna from the lips of the headmaster of our school. From that moment I began to have a liking and devotion towards Sri Ramakrishna. I began to subscribe to the *Prabuddha Bharata*. In 1910 or so I happened to meet Tulsi Maharaj (Swami Nirmalananda) who was invited to Haripad. He took me into his fold and named me Bhakta Nilakantha. He also asked me to work and train some boys, some of whom are now the heads of some Ashramas here and there.

We had a Society at Tiruvalla. M. R. Narayana Pillai, then a Munsif at Tiruvalla, was a great devotee of Sri Ramakrishna and at the direction of Tulsi Maharaj we began to build an Ashrama, the foundation stone being laid in 1911 by Swami Nirmalanandaji Maharaj who was invited to Tiruvalla. In 1913 that Ashrama was opened by him. In the same year the Ashrama at Haripad was also opened. I was given the charge of the Ashrama at Tiruvalla and Dr. Chellappa, who is now Swami Chitsukhananda, that of the Ashrama at Haripad.

In 1916 Tulsi Maharaj wrote to us that he was intending to take the President Maharaj to Cape Comorin.

I was asked to come directly to Alwaye to pay my humble respects to him and to serve him. So I reached Alwaye and one evening the President Maharaj and party alighted at the Alwaye station. Padmanabhan Tampi and others had arranged a bungalow for Maharaj for his stay for two or three days.

I had been serving Tulsi Maharaj for a number of years, but he had spoken not a word about Mantram or meditation, but now the words came from his mouth: "Bhakta! your God is come. You serve him and get yourself initiated."

I was busy with all kinds of things, for we wanted to see Maharaj comfortable. Whenever I found time I used to go and sit at his feet. When I looked at him I was not able to take my eyes away from him. At that time I could not understand what it was that attracted not only my eyes but the whole body. He was a fountain of spirituality, always in Samadhi. His words were few and simple, but full of power. He used to ask me, "What do you want, what do you want?" When I looked at him eagerly, I was not able to define my want. I only requested him to give me the slippers he was putting on. He told me, "I shall not give you these leather ones. I shall be sending you from Calcutta the wooden sandals I was using." The present President, Swami Sankarananda, was acting as the private secretary of Sri Maharaj at that time. Maharaj asked him not to forget to send the wooden sandals to me and they were duly sent. I was taking them wherever I went and now they are in the Ashrama of Tiruvalla. I kept them there intentionally for the progress and prosperity of that place.

At Alwaye many people came to pay their respects to Maharaj. He used to avoid talking. He would send them to Tulsi Maharaj. He liked the place, specially the view of the river very much even though it was raining.

From Alwaye we left for Kottayam. Mr. Padmanabhan Tampi, the Superintendent of Police and M. R. Narayana Pillai, the Munsif and others were with Maharaj. We proceeded to Kottayam by steam-boat. Due to the inclemency of the weather the boat tossed up and down. We had a restless night but we reached Kottayam the next morning safe and sound. Maharaj used to say to me, "Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid."

Mr. Tampi had arranged a place for the stay of Maharaj and party. There also many people used to flock to him from many places. After a stay of two days Maharaj left for Haripad Ashrama by car with his private secretary and Tampi. On the way he was received in several places in the old Hindu style with *deepas* and *arati*.

When he reached Haripad, Brahmachari Chellappa and others were eagerly waiting for him and were ready to receive him in the Vedic fashion with recital of Vedic Mantrams, music and other paraphernalia but I heard that Maharaj did not want all that pomp and show. He exclaimed: "What! am I going in a marriage procession?"

From Kottayam I went to Haripad by steam-boat with Swamis Durganandaji, Bhumanandaji, Yatiswaranandaji, Brahmachari Gopal and others. We reached the Ashrama late at night. Maharaj was taking rest. I went and prostrated

myself before him and came away slowly. Subbarama Iyer, the Manager, had made all the arrangements according to the directions of Tulsi Maharaj, and Maharaj had a quiet time at the Ashrama. He liked the place very much.

On the next day after his arrival, Tulsi Maharaj said to me, "Now, Bhaktan, Maharaj will kindly initiate you tomorrow, so be ready. Do not take anything at night and also in the morning before the initiation." Next morning I was ready. The initiation was to take place inside the shrine. Sri Maharaj had already taken his seat. Sankaranandaji Maharaj was attending at the door. That picture is still fresh in my mind. Tulsi Maharaj sent for me and Sankaranandaji led me in. What do I see? Dakshinamoorthy Himself in his effulgent dignity and silence to bless all. I fell down at his feet. After the preliminary rites, *achamana* etc. he put the sacred Mantra into my heart. I was rejoiced and rejoiced, and felt "*Dhanyoham, dhanyoham*," placed my humble offerings at his feet and came away quietly only to forget myself and to sit in the room of Sri Maharaj for hours together. On the same day many others were also initiated including Subbarama Iyer and others.

Maharaj was quite happy at the Ashrama. Brahmachari Chellappa wanted to make Maharaj stay longer at the Ashrama but he could not. After three or four days Maharaj and his party had to leave Haripad for Quilon at the request of Dr. Tampi who was then practising as a doctor there and had taken initiation from Sri Maharaj several years back.

Again we went by steam-boat. Maharaj was there to

make all of us quite happy and cheerful. A palatial building was taken for Maharaj's stay. Lots of people used to collect there but Maharaj wanted to avoid the crowd. Dr. Tampi was all devotion to Maharaj. Without giving previous information, Maharaj himself visited the doctor's house one morning. The doctor and his family were greatly surprised and did not know what to do at that moment. But their home was purified.

From Quilon we went to Trivandrum. A set of devotees had gone ahead to see to the arrangements of Maharaj's stay at Trivandrum. There was a Vedanta Society there and one Padmanabhan Pillai who had returned from Germany took much interest in it. Maharaj, with the private secretary, and Tulsi Maharaj, left Quilon earlier and we followed later. There was a grand reception at Trivandrum which I missed. The house was illuminated.

The Vedanta Society had acquired a plot of land higher up at Vattiyur Kavoo for a Ramakrishna Ashrama. Sri Maharaj was to lay the foundation stone on an auspicious date. The place was some four or five miles distant from the town, and very quiet. In those days very few cars and other vehicles were found on the road. Many people wanted to attend the sacred function. Tulsi Maharaj reached that place on the previous night and had some Puja and Homa performed. Early morning Maharaj reached the place by car. We all followed, some walking and others in tongas etc. There was a large crowd there. It was a fine sight to see Maharaj laying the foundation stone with his own hands. Prasada was distributed. A photograph also was taken.

This can be seen at some of the Ashramas. Maharaj was very much pleased. The site was quiet, fitted for Sadhan-Bhajan.

All were leaving one by one: I was standing close to Maharaj. He was telling me very much pleased: "Bhakta, you see what a beautiful site this is. You must make some Brahmacharins. When the building is complete let them stay here and do Tapasya - very nice place for Tapasya." Tulsi Maharaj worked hard and a nice, beautiful Ashrama has sprung up there.

Maharaj's sole object of coming to the South was to have Darshan of Mother at Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin): So he was hurrying to visit that place. He had to leave Trivandrum early. He reached Kanya Kumari by car. We all followed him. Maharaj and a select party were accommodated in a two-storeyed building while we all stayed at the Government Dharmasala nearby. One evening he visited the Mandir first, I think. Generally, we used to accompany him with Keertan. He entered the temple calm and quiet, approached nearer and nearer to the image of the Goddess. Inside all was lighted, music and arati were going on. We were seeing Maharaj doing Pranamas with folded hands. He was absolutely silent, face beaming with light and happiness. Even a layman feels some happiness and pleasure in the presence of the Goddess. It is such a fine figure, one of the most beautiful. He wanted to be there for a long time. But the Puja system is such that one cannot be allowed to remain in that divine presence for much time.



SWAMI BRAHMANANDA JI MAHARAJ

Maharaj is preparing to go back to his residence. One sees many *kumaris* (girls) approaching him. He is all love and kindness to the little ones. Tulsi Maharaj is close to him with a full purse. He knows Maharaj's nature. He gives to Maharaj coins after coins and Maharaj distributes them among the little ones.

A Maharaj must have stayed there for a week or so. Every time he went to the temple he was giving money to all. He was enjoying the company of the little ones. He was feeding them at times. He had *Kumari-puja* done. He was interested in their play and dancing. He too behaved like a child. He was child-like but also a terror to all. His mere presence made everything go on quite well automatically. He was not at all willing to leave Kanya Kumari. He was once telling me, "Bhakta, I do not want to go back to Calcutta at all. Ah, I wish I could get a small *kuti* here and could live here all the rest of my life." Look at the spirit of renunciation! This is the characteristic of the truly great. Though he was a *Raja*, he cared little for his possessions. He was like a lotus leaf in water.

Here too there were many who were very desirous of getting initiation from Maharaj. To get initiation from Maharaj was not easy. Somehow or other he did not like it, it seemed. Tulsi Maharaj and Sankar Maharaj had to plead the cause of some. Seshadri and Padmanabhan Pillai were some of the fortunate ones who got it. Seshadri is still living a happy life at Haripad. That Padmanabhan Pillai was a very great devotee of Maharaj but he is now no more.

All were happy at Cape Comorin; especially, Sri

Maharaj. But some were not satisfied with the food there. It was very difficult then to get good food there. Prices also were very high.

Maharaj and party were about to leave the Cape. Thanu Pillai, the Engineer at Nagarkovil, requested Maharaj to break his journey at Nagarkovil and pass one night there. So we all halted there. He gave a sumptuous feast. After some conversation which Maharaj had with Pillai and others, he took complete rest. The next morning he left Nagarkovil and reached Quilon. He stayed at the bungalow taken for his stay on the previous occasion. There regular festivities went on daily. The doctor was very anxious to serve Maharaj in every way possible. There was the appointed time for public meetings when Tulsi Maharaj would be talking to people. Sankar Maharaj was also receiving some people and giving them instructions and advice. Maharaj was enjoying all this. Here also some of the more fortunate ones got initiation from Maharaj, the present Agamanandaji and one Chandrasekhara Pillai being two of them.

Then came Subbarama Iyer and Chellappa from Haripad to take Maharaj once more back to Haripad. Maharaj liked that Ashrama, of course, but he had to reach headquarters without further delay, so he hurried up. I too wanted to go to Calcutta with Maharaj. I requested him to take me to Calcutta. He consented to my accompanying him. But Tulsi Maharaj was very tough. He was scolding me in his usual manner: "You want to go away. Who is there to look after the Ashrama here?" It brought tears in

my eyes. I had to stay back. Maharaj and party left Quilon by special steam-boat. Some of us accompanied him to a place near Haripad and there I had to stay behind.

Maharaj's was a majestic and lovable personality. All his movements were full of grace and dignity. I wanted to serve him. But how could I do it? I did not know. One Swami Bhumanandaji was once applying oil on his body. I too approached and began to do the same and Maharaj remarked: "Bhaktan is painting. The oil must be applied with constant pressure".

Here I stop. What more is there to state. After leaving Maharaj, for many days I was without spirit but gradually recovered. Now Sri Maharaj is in his own *Dham*.

JAI JAI SRI GURU MAHARAJ !

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